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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3081
INFO RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1758
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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STATE FOR OES/IHB, AAIT, MED
HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER AND HICKEY
CDC ATLANTA FOR CCID AND COGH
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E.O. 12958: N/A
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PINR, AMGT, TF, MY
SUBJECT: MALAYSIA H1N1 UPDATE - August 11, 2009

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Ministry of Health (MOH) has reported 14 H1N1-related deaths in the last 48 hours bringing the total to 32 deaths. The Embassy community has experienced its first suspected cases, both involving non-school age children of employees who have been treated and are now recovering. In consultation with RMO Singapore, the Mission reviewed its H1N1 procedures and issued updated influenza guidance to the Mission community. END SUMMARY.

MOH Response

12. (SBU) MOH has reported 32 total H1N1 related deaths, with 14 in the last two days. The confirmed caseload continues to grow with 1780 total cases since the onset of the pandemic. However, MOH is now in a mitigation mode, which means the confirmed caseload understates the actual situation; MOH is not testing or subtyping those who report to private hospitals and clinics or those who are at low risk and choose to treat themselves. The region has also been severely impacted by haze from fires in Indonesia and Malaysia (will be reported septel). The haze has created unhealthy air quality, which can further complicate influenza illness.

13. (SBU) PM Najib has expressed his concern with the spread of the disease and the uptick in flu-related fatalities, and stated on August 10 that he "will ask the Health Minister for tighter measures and more drastic steps that the Government should take on this matter." It remains unclear what those steps might entail, but are likely to include social distancing measures. Najib has asked that unnecessary public gatherings be canceled. Penang chief minister Lim Guan Eng stated that the state-level National Day (August 31) celebrations in Penang may be postponed. The Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin (who is also the Education Minister) said that Education Ministry has contingency plans, including adjusting the dates for public examinations, if the Influenza situation forces school closures. The State education directors would decide on the possibility of school closures on the advice of health authorities.

14. (SBU) The International School of Kuala Lumpur (ISKL) where most

of the children of Mission staff attend school, welcomed students back to school last week, which required them to quickly organize a screening and self-reporting operation at the entrances to both ISKL campuses on the first day of school. ISKL also has an H1N1 action plan in place, which includes plans for "virtual schooling" in the event that a decision is made to close the school for any length of time. ISKL's School Nurse has experience working in Asia during the SARS epidemic, and has been instrumental in compiling the school's action plan.

H1N1 within the Embassy Community

15. (SBU) On August 7, the infant child of an American Mission employee began showing influenza-like symptoms and was taken to the ER of a local hospital over the weekend for evaluation. The rapid test confirmed Influenza A. As such, the case was treated as H1N1 but was not subtyped for confirmation, which is in accordance with MOH protocol. The infant was given oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and released, and is recovering well at home.

16. (SBU) On August 10, a local Mission employee reported that her child exhibited flu like symptoms, who was later confirmed to have Influenza A via the rapid test at a local hospital. The child was treated and is recovering at home.

Post's Actions

17. (SBU) Country team discussed the H1N1 situation on August 10 and

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decided to issue an updated management notice. The notice was prepared in consultation with the RMO in Singapore and provided Mission staff and family members with guidance on steps to be taken in the event flu like symptoms are experienced or observed. The notice also describes the support that can be provided by the Post medical unit and RMO Singapore and reemphasizes observing good personal hygiene habits and staying home if sick.

KEITH